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FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9519
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY 2050
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 6099
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 7961
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 3505
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1253
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ OCT 5016
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 9603
RUEHQD/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 2140
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 2046
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 001731

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/01/2018
TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR SOCI PE
SUBJECT: MORE SOCIAL CONFLICT IN THE PROVINCES

Classified By: Amb. P Michael McKinley for reasons 1.4b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: Over the past two weeks, several social conflicts in different parts of Peru have erupted, testing local security forces, regional governments and new Prime Minister Yehude Simon. In separate incidents in Cusco, Moquegua, Tacna, Cajamarca, and San Martin protestors demanding (or rejecting) projects and resources have taken to the streets and intimidated local security services. In Cusco, Prime Minister Yehude Simon accepted the protestors' key demands, suggesting the GOP may now favor concession -- rather than enforcement of law and order -- as the most appropriate response to rising social tensions in the provinces. None of the current protests is directly linked to APEC. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Over the past two weeks, a series of latent, new and simmering social conflicts has erupted in different parts of Peru, testing local security forces, regional governments, and new Prime Minister Yehude Simon. In Cusco region, protestors for ten days shut down the district of Sicuani, which lies on the tourist train route from Cusco city to Lake Titicaca, demanding the cessation of a hydroelectric project.

On October 24th, protestors attacked several municipal buildings and threw rocks at police, who responded with teargas. These clashes reportedly left dozens of police and protestors injured. The Prime Minister initially blamed the protests on radical agitators with political motives and conditioned formal dialogue on the protestors agreeing to stand down and refrain from violence. He later agreed to suspend the development project, accepted a truce, and scheduled a dialogue with protest leaders on November 4th. Advisors to a Cusco Congresswoman who helped negotiate the truce and will attend the dialogue told Poloff that they anticipate an agreement will be reached to settle the conflict.

¶3. (U) In the southern region of Moquegua, protestors took control on October 28 of a key urban access bridge in the latest episode of a conflict that first ignited in June over the distribution of mining royalties. (Protestors took the same bridge in June, and then took dozens of police hostages when security forces tried to dislodge them.) This time, protestors clashed with police -- leaving 71 injured on both sides -- but then agreed to a truce and left the bridge. The next day, Congress approved a bill that would change the way canon resources are distributed between Mocegua and neighboring Tacna region, responding to most of Moquegua's demands. Tacna responded to the vote with protests of their own, in which 2000 people overwhelmed some 300 police and

burned down two government buildings.

¶4. (U) Two separate social conflicts have disrupted two regions of northern Peru. In Cajabamba province, Cajamarca region, protestors demanding paved roads and other local projects took fourteen hostages, reportedly including some regional government managers. In Nueva Cajamarca district, San Martin region, police fired tear gas at protestors seeking to prevent them from dislodging 500 squatters and accidentally affected students at a nearby school. Despite efforts by local officials and clergy to calm the situation, according to police sources, the protestors responded by burning down the local police station and injuring six police officers. Police sources reported the detention of eight people and one minor injury.

Comment: Police Losing the Upper Hand

¶5. (C) The common thread linking these four geographically isolated, distinct incidents appears to be the inability of local security forces to prevent or contain violent protests. In each case, protestors clashed with police and appear to have forced the authorities to back down. Prime Minister Simon's response to the Sicuani protests may suggest that the GOP has decided that conceding to protestors' demands -- not the enforcement of law and order -- is the most appropriate response to rising social tensions in the provinces at this time.

MCKINLEY